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In the classrooms technology is used as an instructional tool. Technology is a tool that students use to explore, learn, and express knowledge. All the classrooms are outfitted with SmartBoards and computers. The primary grades have a bank of computers in their classrooms. The majority of middle school classrooms have classroom sets of computers. The oldest students have their own iPads which they carry with them.

This past spring we created something called the TLC (Technology Learning Community). The purpose of this community is give teachers an opportunity to hone their technical skills and explore areas of technology which interest them. The teachers meet with the tech team during one of three meeting times depending on their schedule. Occasionally the group met off-campus at the house of yours truly for a more casual gathering. Some topics/skills individuals explored were: digital storytelling, virtual art museum, webquests, using wikis for student feedback, iPad apps and use, Google Docs, and more. Being part of the TLC was optional, but the group enjoyed good attendance. At the end of the year we hosted a TLC showcase in the library where teachers, staff, and administration circulated between stations to see what had been accomplished. The concept was well-received and the group will continue to meet this year.

In grades two through four students come to the library with their teachers once a week to work in the library computer lab. The Librarian and the Instructional Technology Coordinator teach these classes along with the classroom teachers. The children work on assignments for their classrooms while learning new technology skills. When necessary, the students can continue their work in the classroom using a class set of laptops which are available for use by primary students. The focus for these classes is basic computer operations, Internet research, use of online subscription services, word processing, and creating presentations.

Students in grades five and six visit the library computer lab once a week for a combined library/technology class. While the classroom teachers are not always present for these classes, the content is such that it teaches tools/skills that the students will use in their classrooms. For example, right now our fifth and sixth graders are learning to use Google Docs because they will be using Google Docs for future classroom assignments. Students learn about cyber-safety, effective search skills, word processing, keyboarding and more. All of these skills are applied in the classroom. There's a great deal of cross-over; often some of these classes are taught in the classrooms by the Librarian or Instructional Technology Coordinator as the middle school classrooms are equipped with computers.

Technology plays a huge part in the classrooms of the oldest students. This year we are piloting an iPad program. With the exception of Latin, the students don't have physical textbooks for their classes. All the material is on the iPads. So far the program has been well-received.

Technology in the library is key. The Alexandria software allows us to manage our collection in a most efficient way. The children use the computers to search for, select, and locate books they want to read. Students also contribute to the catalog by creating book reviews using Garage Band or iMovie. The library catalog is used to teach Boolean search techniques to the older students. The library has a “classroom set” of Animoto accounts which students use to create various movies which pertain to a particular area of study. For example, they might create a movie detailing what one would find in the 700s.

St. Matthew’s Parish School is a small independent school. We are not a part of a district so we’re not governed by a larger body. We do have a technology plan, as it’s expected by NAIS and WASC who do our accreditation. However, because we are independent we have more flexibility than other schools. Due to the fact that I teach so much technology, I am a key player in the planning and implementing of technology here on our campus. By virtue of my job I am a part of the technology committee. As such, along with the Technology Coordinator, I am responsible for keeping our technology plan up to date. This past summer we worked on the plan to reflect some changes we’d made in our program.

Google Education is the big new push this year for our technology program. We are excited about Google Apps for Education because we feel it will solve some chronic problems we’ve experienced with technology on our campus. One issue it will resolve is the problem of children who have PCs at home and use Apple computers at school. When one uses Google Docs the platform doesn’t matter. Another issue which has been problematic for us in the past is the Word (PC) vs. Pages (Apple) word processing issue. Again, kids often would use one word processor at school and a different one at home. Even if the kids did have the same word processing application at home, often they’d have a different version. This too proved problematic. In the past, kids have transferred work between home and school via flash drives which they would inevitably lose! With Google Docs kids and teachers have the ability to collaborate with each other easily. They can share documents with read only or read/write privileges. Lastly, another big plus for using Google Docs is the fact that it auto saves frequently. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve tried to help students who have inadvertently deleted assignments. With Google Docs we won’t have that problem.

New to our tech plan this year is the introduction of iPads for our older students. The program has been received enthusiastically. Students are engaged and excited about learning. Our middle school faculty has found fabulous apps and has really embraced the program. It’s going to be exciting to see where this leads.

Our elementary students did not have formal technology instruction until two years ago when I volunteered to teach technology for them. It has been very rewarding to see their skills progress as we build the scaffolding each year which will make them successful 21st century learners.